# SUMMARY OF THE ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING AUGUST 16, 2001

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Thursday August 16, 2001 at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) by teleconference. The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Louis Johnson of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to meet with Ms. Jeanne Hankins, National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Director, for her guidance on developing a NELAP Quality Management Plan (QMP).*

## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Johnson began the meeting by welcoming those in attendance to the teleconference. Attendance was recorded as each committee member introduced themselves.

## QMP DOCUMENT FOR NELAP

The committee met with Ms. Hankins to provide insight and clarification on the NELAP QMP. The issues discussed pertained to the format and content of the NELAP QMP and a clarification on the purpose of the instrument. Ms. Hankins gave the following guidance in response to questions from the committee:

- We need a general NELAP QMP with some Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) included. The content should address the whole program and all associated activities. There is nothing unusual expected to be needed in this QMP and one hasn't been prepared before due to the lack of staffing. The content of the QMP should follow standard U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) QMP guidance. The goal is to provide guidance for evaluating NELAP Accrediting Authorities rather than accrediting the laboratory.

- The current training plan for NELAP evaluations can be translated into an SOP. It will provide the basis for developing an on-site assessment SOP. A comparison between the training program and NACLA (National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation) Revision C on-site parts should be made which will provide a good foundation for work on the on-site SOP.

- There are problems with annual review. One of the QA Managers from Las Vegas may perform that function but no commitment has been made at this time.

- An SOP on renewal application was done that can be included.

- An SOP for the field of testing expansion is needed but the regions will draft this document.

- The QMP should be similar to what is prepared for EPA by state departments with the goal of evaluating the NELAP Accrediting Authorities rather than accrediting the laboratory.

- Need SOP for records management. A general EPA SOP has been developed for keeping records of states along with a records management check list. The list needs to be expanded.

- There are also developed SOPs for "field of testing" and "re-application" that could be included.

- The committee noted that there are some examples that could be taken from the NACLA document but it is not suited as a template for the QMP document. The NACLA document provides procedures and strong language on how to do evaluation/assessment of accrediting authorities (AAs) and is more like an SOP rather than a policy or plan.

- It was suggested that the parts of the NACLA document dealing with on-site evaluation should be sent to the regions for consideration since they are taking lead on doing these evaluations.

- The committee should consider including sections in the QMP that address
  - training,
  - renewal of application,
  - field test expansion,
  - records retention,
  - annual review,
  - maintenance, and
  - selection criteria.

  Draft a generic QMP document to cover all the SOPs based on International Organization for Standardization (ISO) QMP guidance, NACLA QMP guidance, EPA QMP guidance or similar guidance. The committee will discuss the options and present them to Ms. Hankins.

- Ms. Hankins volunteered a list of NELAP-trained evaluators that may be useful as background or for use as an attachment and could go in record retention. That type of list (e.g., training) is a typical requirement and probably belongs in a training SOP.

- Mr Johnson will summarize the items identified in the EPA guidence for preparing a QMP and circulate to the committee and Ms. Hankins. Following EPA standard guidelines will make it easier for Ms. Hankins to get approval from EPA. The possibility of linking EPA guidance and Chapter 6 standard guidance was also discussed. However, it was thought that there might be some confusion since some of the contributors may not be familiar with the EPA guidance for developing QMPs which is different for developing QMPs for NELAP and other accrediting programs.

- Submissions and evaluation criteria covered in Chapter 6 should be included in QMP. The national database should also be addressed which is part of tracking and notification;

details are still being worked out for the database. Once the national database is put together the contractor could be asked to draft an SOP for its use. The director has to notify NELAP AAs six months ahead of time that the application is going to be due along with other details and these should also be included in the QMP. Some of the procedures that are in the Accrediting Authorities chapter that can be extracted into an SOP.

- There may be policy procedures that need to go into QMP also. Ms. Hankins also noted that there are elements in Chapter 6 (Accrediting Authorities) that need to be included in NELAP quality systems.

- An SOP on the Director's weekly reporting is also available.

- Ms. Hankins noted that in the minutes from a few months ago there was consideration given to putting QMP in the standard that she could not support. This concern was because changes can only be made to the standard during the annual meetings.

- Language on the use of the NELAP logos should be included in the QMP and this language could probably be borrowed from other documentation. There are currently two logos in use; a round NELAP AA logo and a half-round logo which is given to laboratories. There was some controversy noted about distinguishing the criteria for when each of the logos should be used. Currently some states use the NELAP logo on letterhead and others put it on the certificates. The intent is that the full circle logo can be used by states on letterhead or certificates and it needs to be used on certificates. The half-round logo is for laboratories to use.

- The committee suggested that it may be prudent to develop an outline of the QMP document and then let other committees fill in the details (e.g., database teams).

**FUTURE TELECONFERENCES**

Mr. Johnson reminded those present of the next Accrediting Authority teleconference which is scheduled for August 22, 2001 at 2:30 p.m. EDT.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Johnson summarized the progress from the meeting. He added that during the next meeting the guidance given by Ms. Hankins will be discussed by the committee and that goals for the QMP will be reviewed, a plan will be developed, and assignments will be made to begin drafting the QMP. He then called for any further discussion for the committees' consideration. No further discussion was initiated so Mr. Johnson adjourned the meeting after thanking Ms. Hankins and the others in attendance.

**Attachment A**

**ACTION ITEMS**
**ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING**
**AUGUST 16, 2001**

| Item No. | Action | Date to be Completed |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Mr. Johnson will send a copy of the section of the NACLA document highlighting the areas addressing on-site evaluations, and Ms. Hankins will send to the regions for their input. | 8/20/01 |
| 2. | Ms. Hankins will email to Mr. Johnson the training plan, an SOP on re-application evaluation, records check list, weekly reporting SOP, list of trained evaluators and other pertinent documentation. | 8/20/01 |
| 3. | Mr. Johnson will summarize the critical elements for a QMP from the EPA QMP guidance and circulate to the committee. | Prior to 8/22/01 |
| 4. | Translate on-site assessment training program into SOP | TBA |
| 5. | Mr. Steve Arms, Mr. Scott Hoatson, and Mr. Johnson will make comparison between the training program and NACLA onsite parts for translation into an on-site assessment SOP. | TBA |
| 6. | Ms. Hankins will determine the availability of an SOP for annual reviews. | ASAP |
| 7. | Mr. Johnson and Mr. Arms will work on draft language for use of logos. | TBA |
| 8. | Review Chapter 6 AA's Quality Systems for elements that should also be included in NELAP Quality Systems. Evaluate inclusion of submission and evaluation criteria from Chapter 6 for inclusion in QMP. | TBA |
| 9. | Develop SOP for records management (e.g.,retention and tracking). | TBA |
| 10. | Develop SOP for field test expansion. | TBA |
| 11. | Prepare summary of application for various QMP guidance. | TBA |
| 12. | Prepare outline of QMP document for circulation and review by committees. | TBA |

Note: TBA - to be assigned

**Attachment B**

**PARTICIPANTS**
**ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING**
**AUGUST 16, 2001**

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